



Curecanti National Recreation Area
Colorado

Public Scoping Brochure

Dickerson Pit Expansion Environmental Assessment

The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed expansion of the Dickerson Pit within Curecanti National Recreation Area, Colorado.

Public involvement is a key component in preparing the EA. This public scoping brochure provides information on the environmental analysis process and schedule, and how you can be involved.

I invite you to participate in this process.

Pete Hart
Superintendent

Background

The Dickerson Pit (Pit) is a privately operated mineral materials site within Curecanti National Recreation Area (Curecanti) that has been in existence since 1927. In 1963, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) purchased the surface rights for 79.57 acres from Mrs. Ruth Dickerson for the Colorado River Storage Project. Mrs. Dickerson reserved the right to continue to mine and remove "decomposed granite and the materials intermixed therewith" from a portion of the conveyance, creating a 33.16-acre split mineral estate, together with the right of ingress and egress over the mineral estate. The Pit is located immediately west of U.S. Highway 50, the primary access road through Curecanti.

In 1965, the NPS assumed jurisdiction over the area, including the Pit, pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement with the BOR. The Pit operations have been regulated since the 1980's under NPS special use permits. On February 17, 2003, the current operator, Gunnison Gravel and Earthmoving, submitted a Plan of Operations (plan) that proposes to expand the Pit from the existing permitted operation (12.4 acres) to the maximum 33.16 acres.

The Environmental Analysis Process

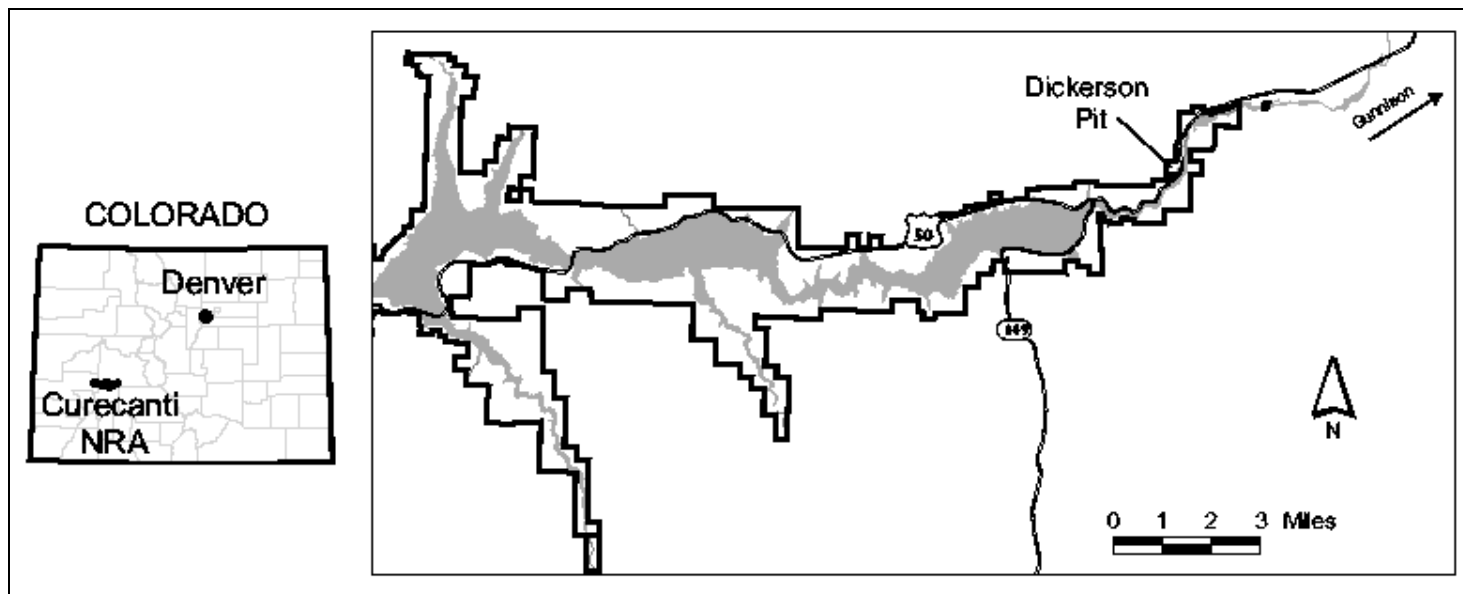
An NPS interdisciplinary team developed the following framework for preparing the EA. We hope it provides you with sufficient information to contribute comments and suggestions.

Project Purpose and Need

The NPS administers Curecanti to provide public recreational facilities; to conserve the scenery, the natural, historic and archeological objects, and the wildlife; and to provide for public use and enjoyment of the same. The federal government owns the surface estate, but not the reserved materials, at the pit. The NPS is required by its laws, policies and regulations to protect the park unit from any actions that may adversely impact or impair park resources and values. For this reason, the NPS regulates the operations at the Pit. The expansion of the Pit has the potential to impact park resources and values. NPS preparation of the EA will provide guidance that will ensure the long-term protection of park resources, values, visitor use, and human health and safety from the adverse effects of the proposed expansion, while allowing reasonable access.

Objectives of the Environmental Assessment

- Develop alternatives that would provide the holders of private mineral rights reasonable access for development, to the extent it does not compromise the purposes of Curecanti National Recreation Area.
- Analyze potential impacts to cultural resources on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; natural; and socioeconomic resources.
- Develop measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to park resources and values; and prevent impairment.
- Involve the public in the environmental process.



Map of Curecanti National Recreation Area.

Preliminary List of Resources and Concerns that Could be Affected by Expansion of the Dickerson Pit

Park Operations

Nonfederal Mineral Development

- availability of mineral materials in the region
- effects on the operator and mineral owners

Air Quality

- pollutants (dust and other emissions)

Geologic Resources

- soils
- topography
- geohazards

Water Resources and Floodplains

Wetlands

Vegetation

- loss of vegetation
- introduction of non-native species

Fish and Wildlife

- great blue heron rookery and other nesting birds
- ungulates (deer and elk) and rodents
- effects of noise

Species of Management Concern

- Gunnison sage grouse
- Peregrine falcon
- effects of noise
- Gunnison milkvetch

Cultural Resources

- archeological resources
- ethnographic resources

Visitor Use and Experience

- human health and safety
- natural scenery
- effects of noise
- traffic

Preliminary Range of Alternatives

Alternative A, No-Action

- No expansion of the Pit, but previously-permitted extraction on 12.4 acres would continue.

Alternative B, Proposed Action

- Expansion of the Pit to fully develop the 33.16-acre mineral estate with mitigation measures necessary to avoid or reduce adverse impacts and prevent an impairment of park resources and values.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

- Acquisition of the mineral estate was examined by the NPS interdisciplinary team during internal scoping. At this time, due to severe budget reductions, funding is not available to purchase the mineral estate.

Steps in the Planning Process

1. Public Scoping
2. Data Collection
3. Preparation of EA
4. Public Review of EA

November 24 - December 31, 2003

October – December 2003

Winter 2004

Spring 2004

The National Park Service Wants Your Participation

Your input is important in developing the Environmental Assessment. The National Park Service is interested in receiving your comments to the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the list of resources and concerns that could be affected by the proposed expansion of the Pit? Are there other resources and concerns the NPS should address in the EA?
2. Do you agree with the range of alternatives proposed? Do you have additional suggestions for the NPS to consider?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for the National Park Service to address in the EA?

Please send comments to: Ken Stahlnecker, Chief, Resource Stewardship and Science
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